



Proposed Action & Alternatives

Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake

Final Environmental Impact Statement

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action by the Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake is to accommodate an increase in current test and training operations and to comply with the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA) of 1994 and the Sikes Act as amended in 1997.

The established mission of NAWS is to conduct state-of-the-art weapons test and evaluation and operational training within a safe, secure, and operationally diverse land range test environment.

The need for the proposed action and subsequent development of the Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan (CLUMP), the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP), and associated EIS have been driven by the following factors:

- 1) Changes to the type, tempo, and location of military test and training operations that support the military readiness mission in response to changing world events, Department of Defense (DoD)/Navy fiscal directives, and NAWS business development initiatives, and
- 2) Passage of new laws and regulations affecting land use and environmental resource management.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Navy proposes to accommodate an increase in the tempo of military test and evaluation, and operational training activities conducted at NAWS China Lake. The minor land use changes that would result from a decision to accommodate an increase in military operations would be reflected in the NAWS China Lake CLUMP.

Under the terms of the CDPA of 1994, the CLUMP is the strategic planning vehicle through which NAWS manages land use and environmental resources. The CLUMP reflects the integration of range management strategies, the installation's INRMP, which is required under the Sikes Act as amended in 1997, and other management tools, such as the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan.

Military Operations

Proposed changes to military operations include increases in the type and tempo of ongoing military test and evaluation, training, and support operations. Increases in military operations would be over 5 years (according to operational needs) and include expansion of range flight operations (both subsonic and

supersonic), airfield flight operations, and range ground operations (target and test site use and ground troop training would take place only on previously disturbed land).

Nonmilitary Uses

Nonmilitary uses requiring access to NAWS-administered lands would continue to be accommodated at NAWS. Public access would continue to be limited to specific areas on a case-by-case basis due to established safety and security requirements. Limited public access to designated areas would continue to be permitted according to the terms and conditions granted by the NAWS Commanding Officer. The Navy would continue to accommodate nonmilitary uses to the extent that these activities are compatible with military operations; do not create a safety, security, fiscal, or regulatory risk; and do not adversely impact the Station's natural and cultural resources. Nonmilitary uses will be the same for all three alternatives.

CLUMP AND INRMP IMPLEMENTATION

Since NAWS is required by law to have a Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan (CLUMP) and Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) in place for any level of range operations, the proposed action includes implementation of these plans, reflecting minor changes in land use projected for accommodating moderate increase in military operations.

The CLUMP is a long-term, strategic plan that formalizes corporate processes for land use planning and management at NAWS. This plan provides an integrated framework for the management of military operations, public health and safety practices, and environmental resource conservation programs. As the strategic planning vehicle for NAWS, the CLUMP incorporates the Station's INRMP.

The INRMP establishes the goals and management guidelines to conserve and protect the Station's natural resources in accordance with Sikes Act amendments, and other applicable directives in a manner that is consistent with the Station's operations.

ALTERNATIVES ADDRESSED

Three alternatives are analyzed in this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). These include the No Action Alternative, the Limited Expansion Alternative, and the Moderate Expansion Alternative. A comparison of the three alternatives analyzed in this document is provided in the table on the back.

Military Uses			
Activity	No Action Alternative	Limited Expansion Alternative	Moderate Expansion Alternative
Range Flight Operations	Continue current level of test and training operations at approximately 4,600 flight hours per year. Continue current level of supersonic operations at an average of three per month (36 per year).	Subsonic operations would increase by 15% over 5 years. Use would increase by 690 additional flight hours to a total of 5,290 annual flight hours. Supersonic operations would increase by approximately 2 per week, or up to a total of 100 events per year.	Subsonic operations would increase by 25% over 5 years. Use would increase by 1,150 additional flight hours to a total of 5,750 annual flight hours. Supersonic operations would increase by approximately 2 per week, or up to a total of 100 events per year.
Airfield Flight Operations	Continue current level of operations at approximately 27,000 annual flight operations.	Operations would increase by 15% over 5 years. Use would increase by 4,050 additional flight operations to a total of 31,050 annual operations.	Operations would increase by 25% over 5 years. Use would increase by 6,750 additional flight operations to a total of 33,750 annual operations.
Range Ground Operations			
Target and Test Sites	Continue current use of existing authorized target and test sites on the North and South ranges, which include those at Airport Lake, Baker, Charlie, George, and Coso ranges (North Range), and at Charlie Airfield and Randsburg Wash Gunline (South Range). Total acreage of target and test sites currently used is 7,000 acres (2,833 hectares). Tempo of target and test site use would remain at approximately 4,600 hours annually.	Continue current operations, plus 1) Increase tempo of target and test sites and associated ordnance use by approximately 15% over 5 years. Use would increase 690 hours to a total of 5,290 hours annually. 2) Resume use of all previously disturbed but currently underutilized target and test sites range-wide (approximately 2,140 acres [866 hectares]), for a total target and test site acreage of 9,140 acres (3,699 hectares). 3) Re-introduce the use of high explosives (HE) at Wingate Airfield in Mojave B North (South Range) for the delivery of precision-guided munitions (for limited use [2-3 times per year]).	Continue current operations, plus 1) Increase tempo of target and test sites and associated ordnance use by approximately 25% over 5 years. Use would increase 1,150 hours to a total of 5,750 hours annually. 2) Resume use of all previously disturbed but currently underutilized target and test sites range-wide (approximately 2,140 acres [866 hectares]), for a total target and test site acreage of 9,140 acres (3,699 hectares). 3) Re-introduce the use of HE at Wingate Airfield in Mojave B North (South Range) and at the Bullseye Target in Superior Valley (South Range) for the delivery of precision-guided munitions (for limited use [2-3 times per year]).
Ground Troop Training	Continue current patterns of GTT at existing areas of operations. Types 1 ^a and 2 ^b would remain at current levels. North Range: 1,650 use-days* on 33,900 acres (13,719 hectares). South Range: 2,300 use-days* on 287,515 acres (116,354 hectares). Total Use-Days: 3,950* Total Acres/Hectares: 321,415/130,073	Continue current operations, plus increase the tempo of Type 1 and 2 operations in established areas over 5 years. North Range: Increase use by 1,650 use-days* for a total of 3,300 use-days* on 33,900 acres (13,719 hectares). South Range: Increase use by 2,300 use-days* for a total 4,600 use-days* on 287,515 acres (116,354 hectares). Total Use-Days: 7,900* Total Acres/Hectares: 321,415/130,073	Continue current operations, plus increase the tempo of Type 1 and 2 operations in established areas over 5 years, establish a Type 1 operation area in the Coso Target Range, and introduce Type 3 ^c training at Airport Lake. North Range: Increase use by 3,150 use-days* at Airport Lake and Coso Target Range for a total of 4,800 use-days* and add 24,748 acres (10,015 hectares) for a total use area of 58,648 acres (23,734 hectares). South Range: Increase use by 2,300 use-days* for a total of 4,600 use-days* on 287,515 acres (116,354 hectares). Total Use-Days: 9,400* Total Acres/Hectares: 346,163/140,088
^a Type 1: Small-scale; light infantry only, no vehicles. ^b Type 2: Medium-scale; infantry with wheeled vehicles only (e.g., trucks). ^c Type 3: Large-scale; infantry with wheeled and tracked vehicles (e.g., tanks) *Use-Day = one person for one 8-hour day			
Nonmilitary Uses			
Activity	No Action, Limited Expansion, and Moderate Expansion Alternatives		
Native American Uses	Continue access to Coso Hot Springs and Prayer Site per Memorandum of Agreement. Consider other access on a case-by-case basis.		
Research and Education	Continue ongoing projects and consider others on a case-by-case basis.		
Recreation	Camping Allow camping at Birchum Springs on a case-by-case basis. Golf and Gym Keep golf course and gymnasium open to the public. Hiking Consider on-Station hikes on a case-by-case basis. Equestrian Accommodate access at a specified area on G-Range Approach Corridor on a case-by-case basis. Off-Road Vehicle Permit off-road vehicle use of Randsburg Wash Access Road during public events sponsored by the Bureau of Land Management. Petroglyph Tours Allow petroglyph tours as described in the NAWA Public Access Policy. Bird Watching Allow Audubon Society annual bird counts. Photography Allow photography on a case-by-case basis.		